

Amendments to the Claims:

The following listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

1. (Currently Amended) A method for dewatering and reducing pore volume of water-containing coal, comprising heating the water-containing coal at a temperature of 100°C to 350°C under a pressure not less than a saturated steam pressure at the temperature for the heating, while simultaneously applying a shearing force of 0.01 MPa to 20 MPa to the water-containing coal, in a sealed vessel.

2. (Original) The method according to Claim 1, wherein the shearing force is applied by a stirring blade provided in the sealed vessel.

3. (Previously Presented) The method according to Claim 1, wherein the temperature for the heating is 150°C to 300°C.

4. (Previously Presented) The method according to Claim 1, wherein the pressure during the heating is not more than the saturated steam pressure at the temperature for the heating + 0.5 MPa, provided that the pressure does not exceed 17.8 MPa.

5. (Previously Presented) The method according to Claim 1, wherein the shearing force is 0.1 MPa to 10 MPa.

6. (Previously Presented) The method according to Claim 1, wherein the heating is conducted in a period of from three minutes to five hours.

7. (Previously Presented) The method according to Claim 1, wherein the water-containing coal is brown coal containing 25 weight% to 85 weight% of water, calculated on the basis of the water-containing coal.

8. (Previously Presented) A method for preparing slurry, comprising providing in a sealed vessel a mixture obtained according to Claim 1, containing water which has been removed from water-containing coal and coal from which the water has been removed, and

subsequently removing the water from the mixture existing in the sealed vessel or adding water to the mixture, to adjust a water content in a final mixture to 30 weight% to 50 weight%, calculated on the basis of the mixture.

9. (Previously Presented) The method according to Claim 8, wherein the water content in the final mixture is 40 weight% to 50 weight%.

10. (Previously Presented) A method comprising providing a mixture containing water which is removed from water-containing coal and coal from which the water is removed in a sealed vessel as obtained according to Claim 1, subsequently removing the water from the mixture to isolate the coal from which the water was removed.

11. (Original) The method according to Claim 10, wherein water is removed from the mixture so that the coal contains not more than 15 weight% of water, based a total amount of the coal and water.

12. (Original) The method according to Claim 10, wherein water is removed from the mixture so that the coal substantially does not contain water.

13. (Previously Presented) A method for preparing bitumen-containing coal, comprising adding 1 weight% to 25 weight% of bitumen, calculated on the basis of dry coal, to the dewatered coal obtained in the method according to Claim 10.

14. (Original) The method according to Claim 13, wherein an amount of the bitumen is 5 weight% to 20 weight%, based on the dry coal.

15. (Previously Presented) The method according to Claim 13, wherein the bitumen is natural asphalt, petroleum asphalt or coal tar.

16. (New) The method of claim 1, wherein the pore volume of the water-containing coal is reduced by at least 68%.